

Gills

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Summary: What if our resident blond cook had some rather...fishy features? part-fishman!Sanji, inspired by the lovely art by maplebars as you can plainly see from the amazing cover image.

1. Chapter 1

****Guess which mother-f-er decided to start another fanfic instead of finishing the other ones first?****

****â€|****

****This mother-f-er, that's who.****

****...****

*****cough* moving on. This fic is inspired by the lovely maplebars art! I suggest you check it out on tumblr!*****

****Disclaimer: I own nothing but my two hands to type this.****

*** * ***

><p>Sanji scratched irritably at the collar of his suit. It was abnormally hot today and it was just the right temperature for it to be incredibly uncomfortable to wear anything that has long sleeves or collars. Or black. Sanji sighed through his nose. He felt like he was slowly dying of heatstroke and he's starting to feel the beginnings of a rash that's probably going to spread. Sanji winced as one of his movements agitated his neck. Yep, definitely going to spread. Lovely.<p>

Sanji screamed internally, glaring at the wall quite harshly because he needed to blame something for his misery. Seriously, if the world wasn't filled with judgemental assholes he wouldn't have this

problem. But the world is filled with judgemental assholes. So he does have this problem. Shhh let him be petty.

"Sanji! Stop slacking off and get your lazy ass back to work!" A sudden scream snapped Sanji out of his thoughts. He re-aimed his glare to the cook who screamed at him and flipped the cook off before returning his attention back to the current seafood dish he was working on. That was spicy. With the fire was slowly licking at his skin. The next step was to flambé it. And he was done with this shit.

He quickly finished off the dish and turned the stove to low so it would be ready for the next person to use and washed his hands. As he passed the man who he considered a father he quickly made some hand gestures to the older man.

'_I'm taking a break. I'm going to take a dip in the ocean.'_ All he got was a nod in reply and Sanji let out a slight breath of relief. He was not in the mood to argue with the old man in this heat.

Sanji quickly went to his room and changed into his swimming trunks and sun shirt, applying a bit of ointment onto his rash and dove into the cool water the moment he reached the deck of the Baratie.

Sanji sighed happily as he felt the cool water wash away the sweat he had been building for the whole day, as he opened his eyes and swam through the reef, occasionally biting playfully at some fish with his sharp teeth. His sharp shark teeth.

Sanji looked around the ocean with his strange round black eyes with a slight blue tinge that were definitely not human. He grinned toothily as he lazily swam in the blue water. It was only when he was by himself and in the water when he was completely himself and relaxed. No one staring at him like he was a monster, no one looking at him like he was no better than the dirt they walk on, just him and the ocean.

Being a half-breed means having shit thrown at you every day. Especially when your half-breed is half human and half fishman, with the one of the races thinking they're more superior than the other. Having of the blood of both races seems to be hard for others to swallow so basically Sanji's whole existence fucks with people. Neither human nor fishman. Or able to fit in.

Sanji frowned slightly, mood souring, before shaking himself of the depressing thoughts and continued swimming. It didn't take long for him to be completely relaxed again.

Sanji started moving his tongue around, checking for any loose teeth, spitting out the ones that had fallen out after a little bit of probing, the teeth slowly sinking to the ocean floor. That's one problem with being a shark. Constantly losing teeth was annoying, but at least it grows back fast enough that it won't bother his meals. Well, at least it won't bother him, can't say the same for his meal.

A sudden movement caught his eye and he turned around face to face with a Seaking. Sanji stared blandly at the creature. It looked like a mutant of a cow, a fish and a sea lion and so far, according to Sanji, despite its efforts to look menacing, was failing miserably in

the scary department. It actually looked kinda cute; it almost made him feel bad to hurt the creature. Almost.

All it took was one hard kick to the skull before the creature got the message, swimming away and crying pitifully, leaving Sanji alone again. He decided to check how far away he swam from the Baratie this time and surfaced again, making sure to close his gills and switch to lungs. His head bobbed up and down with the waves and Sanji realised he may have swum further than expected, as the floating restaurant was nowhere in sight.

_Ah, this is bad. Old fart's gonna be mad. _Sanji scratched his head and was about to dive back under the water when he realised he wasn't that far away from an island.

Sanji stared. It definitely seemed like an interesting one, if that's to put it kindly. He saw a massive temple with large metal gates not on the island but actually in the sea. To top it off there was even a wall surrounding it. On the temple were the words Arlong Park.

_Well someone sure is full of themselves. _Sanji thought sizing up the whole estate, unimpressed. _I will never understand why people think that it's necessary to have a whole buildings and islands named after them. Who do they think they are? God?... Apparently so._

Sanji rolled his eyes and was about to dip back under the surface of the ocean when he heard a deep gravelly voice that made the hair on the back of his neck stand.

"Going out again Nami?"

"Of course, don't think I forgot our deal, Arlong." Came a female voice this time. She has a light and sweet voice but it had cold undertone that made Sanji frown. Something's not right with her, human or fishman(woman?) a lady's a lady and Sanji's natural instinct to help her rose up.

Curiosity getting the better of him he swam towards the brick wall surrounding the 'park' and dipped back underwater. He looked around for any gaps in the wall and found none. He shrugged and kicked a giant hole into the wall and swam across to the other side. Immediately he came face to face with two fishmen, who stared at him shock for a moment before their eyes hardened and each drew out a nasty looking cutlass.

_Shit. _Sanji thought dryly. Approximately 5 minutes later all fishmen were lying unconscious on the ocean floor. Sanji only stared at them blankly, floating only slightly above the unconscious and sighed disappointedly. _Geez, I was expecting them to be stronger. That was boring._

Back to the original task, Sanji swam up towards the surface and silently raised half of his face out of the water. He looked up at the raised platform out of the ocean and saw the back of young human woman with short, mikan coloured hair. She was wearing a white shirt with blue stripes and a short orange skirt with ring patterns decorating the sides. Her body was hiding whoever she was talking to so unless Sanji wanted to risk getting caught he had to stay low. He'll make do with a grey blob for the other voice.

"Our deal, of course. How could I forget? To buy your village back no matter how long it takes you." A different voice spoke and seemed to be leering. The girl— Nami was it? At least that what he heard, visibly tensed.

"And you intend to keep it, won't you Arlong?" Nami clipped out.

Sanji frowned. _Arlong? Where have I heard that name before—?_

"Why yes, I would never break a deal about money." By then Sanji learned the leery tone was just the default voice of this 'Arlong' and Sanji did not like it. It set his teeth on edge. A grey blob that was misshapen and ugly suited this voice perfectly, Sanji concluded.

"Hmph." Was all he had as a warning to duck back under water when Nami suddenly turned around. Had he been any slower he would have been right in the line of sight of the mikan-haired girl. _That was close._

Sanji looked down at the defeated fishmen and decided it was probably best to leave before someone finds him. He swam out of his self-made hole and swam around to the other side of the island. He broke the surface of the ocean after what he believed was a safe distance away and sighed. _Well that was interesting— and also taking up way too much time I need to get back to the Baratie now._

As he was about to dive back under the surface he heard a gasp behind him. Sanji froze and slowly turned around. Staring at straight at him or more specifically, his gills, was the mikan-haired girl, Nami. She was staring at him with wide eyes, freezing halfway through her packing for her next voyage. Sanji could only stare back and sheepishly waved in hello.

To say Nami was surprised was an understatement. At first when she heard the splash she thought it was just another fishman to harass her but when she actually looked up she saw a human man. Well at least human until she took a closer inspection. The human man had gills. Humans weren't supposed to have gills. But he wasn't a fishman, that much Nami was sure about. Neither human or fishman so—what was he?

_I should have worn something that covered up more. _Sanji thought, slightly panicking as Nami continued to stare. _What should I do? She's been quiet for a while— maybe I should swim away before she says anything._

Nami snapped out of her stupor when she noticed the blond haired—man? Began to slip under the surface.

"Ah wait!" Nami called out right before Sanji completely slipped away. "Who are you?"

Sanji froze and slowly emerged from the water again_. Shit. Well great, I can't ignore her now, she's a lady, it would be rude to leave while she's trying to talk to me. Wait, oh yeah that's right, I can't talk, not unless I want to scare the living daylights out of

her, which I don't._

As Sanji was deciding what's his best course of action Nami began to observe him more closely now that she calmed down after her initial shock. He looked nothing like the fishmen in the Arlong Pirates. While even the smallest member of Arlong Pirates was remotely taller than most average sized humans, the strange fish-man was most definitely the height of a man. He was frowning slightly, with his head slightly cocked like he was thinking really hard about something. _Well he doesn't seem dangerous._ Nami thought.

He was only wearing swimming trunks with a loose short-sleeved shirt, exposing a fair amount of skin that was pale. Extremely pale, it looked downright inhuman and unhealthy but despite that, he had a strong build and Nami can obviously see the defined muscles on the lean body that suggested anything but weak. He looked human but some features obviously weren't. He had strange curly eyebrows but they were the most normal out of all the strange features Nami could see. His eyes, for instance; while were the size of normal human eyes, rarely blinked and the pupils were huge, with only a thin circle of bright blue encircling it. His ears were slightly pointed and had a slight grey tone at the ends. When blonde fish person lifted his hands out of the water Nami could see a small amount of webbing between his fingers. Then he started doing weird gestures with his hands and Nami could only stare back in confusion. _Huh?_

Sanji decided to check if the girl, Nami, knew sign language. And judging by the confused look on her face probably meant she had no idea what the hell he was doing and is starting to think there is a very high chance that Sanji was a lunatic. Sanji sunk half his face in the ocean and released a breath of exasperation, the air escaping into little bubbles that gurgled the moment it reached the surface.

When the strange fish-man began gurgling underwater Nami stared. _Is he alright? _Nami sweat dropped. _Weird._

It could be the annoyed look on his face or the fact he was doing such a childish action but Nami started to giggle. Soon she was laughing the most she had in years, whether it was because of so many years spent in solitude and misery had finally cracked her or some other deranged reason she didn't care. She just threw her head back and laughed.

Sanji only stared up at her in surprise. Normally when people catch a glimpse of his other unhuman features they would either recoil in disgust or scream in fear. To see this girl laughing it felt refreshing. Soon Sanji found himself smiling as well and now both were laughing for no apparent reason, one was clutching her stomach on a small dingy little boat while the other was floating in his swimwear, trying hard not to accidentally choke on seawater. After several minutes of laughing for no apparent reason, Nami finally calmed down and wiped away her tears of mirth, before looking down back at the fish-man in the water still smiling.

"So I'm guessing you can't speak?" Nami asked. The fish-man gave a shrug and did a so-so gesture with his hand.

"You don't want to speak?" Nami guessed. Sanji gave a thumbs up in confirmation. "Why?"

Sanji frowned and attempted to act out what he wanted to say. Nami tried to interpret what he was trying to tell her but in the end she shook her head. "This is ridiculous, I'll go get a pen and paper."

Sanji only smiled in relief that he didn't have to do a bad game of charades.

* * *

><p>"So, first let's introduce ourselves." Nami gestured to herself. "I'm Nami. I am a thief who only steals from pirates."<p>

Sanji raised an eyebrow in interest at the peculiar introduction. He began scribbling on the notepad that Nami had gotten him, leaning against the side of the boat with his arms dangling on the other side of the railing.

I'm Sanji, first-rate cook of the sea. It is a pleasure to meet a lovely lady as you Miss Nami.

"Ho~ bit of a lady charmer, aren't you?" Nami smiled when Sanji gently took one her hands and placed a chaste kiss on the back. "Nice to meet you too, Sanji-kun."

Sanji blinked slightly at the honorific in surprise but smiled brightly. It made Nami wonder how the blonde man was being treated usually if hearing an honorific added to his name made him this happy.

"Soâ€|you going to tell me why you refuse to speak?" Nami decided to prod. Sanji immediately lost the smile and gained a troubled expression. He quickly scribbled again.

People tend to be rather startled when I talk.

"Why?" Nami inquired after skimming through the neat print.

As you can tell, I'm not entirely human and some people find my unhuman features unpleasant and that's putting it nicely. One in particular is rather disturbing for them.

"Can you show me? I promise I won't over react." Nami promised. "I'm a girl of my word."

Sanji hesitated and quickly wrote something down.

Are you sure?

"How bad could it be? You have gills and rather strange ears and eyes. People might find it strange but I don't see how that can scare-ok never mind." Nami cut herself off when Sanji parted his mouth slightly, his rows of sharp deadly teeth on display. "I see why now."

Sanji grimly shut his mouth and nodded in agreement. He was surprised through; he was expecting the girl to jump back in shock but all she did was widen her eyes slightly. Then again judging by the temple she just came from she's probably used to sharp teeth. That place was

teeming with fishermen.

"Um, are you willing to talk now?" Nami asked kindly. "You don't have to if you don't want to."

Sanji frowned slightly. He can't remember the last time he actually talked out loud. He usually communicates via sign language with the rest of the chefs and the old geezer. He could talk to the chefs but it got exhausting after a while and the old fart wasn't one much for conversation. Sometimes if he was lucky he could converse with a deaf customer every now and then but not many people bother to learn sign and he can't use his voice.

"It's fine if you don't want to, we can communicate with pen and paper." Nami quickly conveyed, taking Sanji's slight frown as a no.

"Ah, no it's fine we can talk." Sanji spoke softly, wincing slightly at the cracking of his voice. "I justâ€|haven't used my voice in a long time that's all."

Nami blinked in surprise at the soft low baritone that Sanji possessed. She was expecting something higher pitched since he looked he was still in his teens but instead she heard a much lower voice of an adult man. His voice reminded Nami of those jazz singers at a party she raided from once. It wasn't amazing but it wasâ€|comforting. It reminded her of times of Nojiko supporting her when things got too heavy. Nami quickly shook thoughts of home from her mind.

"So is there a reason why you have these features?" Nami decided to ask. "Were you born like this?"

"â€|I was born this way, yes." Sanji replied after a slight pause. Sanji lowered his eyes and began twiddling his thumbs and sighed. "I'm half human and halfâ€|fishman."

Nami widened her eyes before lowering her head to process the information. Half human and half fishman? That was new. She's never heard of it, or even thought it was biologically possible. Or mentally. Nami thought all fishermen hated humans, likewise with humans hating fishermen. The two species never got along. Nami got first-hand experience of these interactions. The reminder of _that _day made her unconsciously reach for her shoulder before lowering her hand back down. _Half human and half fishmanâ€|huh? Seems like something that would put you through a lot of shit. _Nami clenched her hand into a fist and smiled bitterly. _Looks like I found a buddy in 'I have a fucked up life' department._

Sanji refused to make eye contact with Nami. He didn't want to see the disgusted look on her face after finding out he had the blood of a hated species in his veins. It was fun meeting someone who wasn't terrified by his looks, but Sanji knew the moment they learned why he had these features they would immediately never want to come in contact with him again. He's experienced it way too many times. The same look of disgust of what he was. Never who he was.

"â€|Well that explains the fish features. I'm guessing shark?" Sanji snapped his head up at this. The moment he looked up the first thing he saw was the smile on Nami's face. It was sad, but it had a feel of

acceptance. Acceptance. Of all the reactions he was expecting that was the least, it didn't even cross his mind.

"Blue shark to be exact." Sanji went on auto mode. He was being accepted. He wasn't being judged by what he was. He was being accepted. _He _was being _accepted _by another person!

"Why?" Sanji suddenly blurted out.

"Why what?" Nami asked rhetorically, raising an eyebrow. "That I don't care about what your genes are?"

Sanji nodded and Nami quietly spoke, "You never asked to be born this way, so why should I add onto the pain? I know what it's like to be hated by everyone. I have a whole village to prove it."

Nami sighed. "I'm worse than you. People might hate you for what you are but those people are just blockheads who are afraid of change. There are people who don't hate you as a person, am I right?"

Images of Zeff and the other chefs flashed through Sanji's head. Before he could say anything else Nami continued.

"There are people who like you for you, not for what you are. That's not the case for me." Nami gripped her shoulder this time, her skin going white underneath her sleeve from the pressure. Her mark of shame. Permanently imbedded in her skin in purple. "It won't matter if I was human, fishman or some other weird creature. What I did was unforgivable and that makes me the worst person there is in _their_ eyes."

Before she knew it everything poured out. All out in a relentless rush, all the pent up frustrations, fear, sadness, anger, misery; Nami said it all. From Bellemere's death, to joining the Arlong Pirates and making the deal of buying her village back. Nami was slowly going into hysterics as she finished talking. "To them those fishmen had ruined our lives and I went and betrayed them. They killed her right in front of my eyes and theirs and I went and joined them. They all probably think I'm the worst scum alive and will never forgive me no matter what. A WHOLE VILLAGE HATES ME! A whole village of people I love and grew up with hates me! And now I've gone and told everything to a stranger! 13 years of keeping it all in and the person I dump everything on is a stranger! Whyâ€| whyâ€|Iâ€|"

Nami began to sob, curling in on herself. Sanji was frozen. He didn't know what to do, he's had episodes before and usually when that happens only the old man could touch him. If anyone else tried he would lash out; biting, screaming and crying. He didn't know if it was the same for Nami.

"They took everything... absolutely everything." Nami sobbed. With that Sanji swooped over the edge of the boat and scooped Nami up into a hug, the boat swaying with the momentum. Nami, after a moment's hesitation hugged back. She didn't even register that she was getting wet, she just clung onto Sanji's sun shirt and cried, with Sanji rubbing her back in soothing circles. After a few minutes, Nami finally quietened down and pushed herself out of Sanji's embrace and harshly rubbed away the remaining of her tears.

"I'm sorry about that, forget anything you heard me say, it never

happened." Nami shadowed her eyes with her fringe. Sanj opened his mouth but before he could say anything Nami spoke again.
"Please."

The small plead made Sanji's mouth snap shut. He also lowered his eyes and slid back into the water. after a few moments of silence, he spoke up again.

"Nami-swan." Said girl looked up at the strange honorific. "Talking with you has been very enjoyable, I can't remember the last time I had a conversation like this."

After he composed himself he gave Nami a huge smile, teeth and all.
"If you would ever like to meet again, come to the Baratie!"

And with that he was gone.

* * *

><p>One year later

_Again? _Sanji thought as he woke up in his bed. He reached over to his bedside table, scuffling around before finally finding his target. He gave a sigh of relief and automatically lit a cigarette. Taking in a huge drag, he slowly breathed out a swirl of toxic smoke.
I wonder how Nami-swan is doing.

It's been a year since he's met Nami. For the past year he paid her home island little visits, each time he left behind a small pile of money and other earnings. He's never met the redhead face to face again but he knew she was getting his offerings since every time he went back to the spot where he put his offerings was always empty.

After Sanji had returned back to the Baratie that day, after getting an earful from Zeff he went through all the wanted posters that were collected from every News Co. Soon he found what he wanted. _ARLONG 20,000,000 beri bounty. A big shot for East Blue. Little Miss Cat's gonna need all the luck she can get._

Ever since he came back that day the chefs noticed him staring off into space a lot more often than usual. Every time they ask him what happened he always gave them the same answer.

"I met a little cat."

In the end the chefs gave up but the ones that knew him for longer still bought it up every now and then but all Sanji would do is smile slightly and tell them the same thing.

Over the year somewhere at the back of Sanji's mind he would always find it worrying about the ginger cat burglar. Before Sanji knew it he started seeing her as a younger sister, despite only having one conversation with her. Hearing what happened to her made it impossible for Sanji to feel anything else but a sense of protection towards her. Or any women really, he's just can't see himself sullyng a lady without feeling a sense of wrongness. Either way, he hopes that next time the two meet it will be under nicer circumstances.

"Oi! Sanji! Wake up, you lazy ass!" A banging sounded on his door, shocking Sanji awake from his half asleep state and thoughts. He scowled at the door and threw his pillow at it as an answer. It landed with an audible poof before sliding harmlessly down to the floor. After several years of being greeted like this in the morning you would think one would get used to it. They do, but it doesn't mean it isn't any less annoying.

Sanji dragged himself from the warmth of his blankets and began to make a half-assed attempt to get ready quickly.

"Hurry up!" Bellowed the voice who woke him up.

Sanji scowled and flipped at the door despite the fact the cook on the other side can't see it. _You know, telling me to go faster like that is just motivating me to go slower. _Sanji thought, irked, as he finished tying his tie and made sure his hair was in place before giving a small, unconvincing, closed lipped smile. _I have a feeling today's going to be exhaustingâ€|_

Barely even reaching 11 o'clock in the morning Sanji heard a loud boom erupt right above the restaurant on the second floor, rocking the boat dangerously. As Sanji was calming down a few customers he stared up in confusion at the sudden silence that followed the chaos. _What on earthâ€|?_

Not even 15 minutes later, the Old Fart along with some other person fell through the roof into the restaurant causing yet another ruckus. Sanji was starting to feel a headache merging at the front of his brain with all the random shenanigans that happened within a span of 20 minutes.

Yep. Sanji sighed as he stared at the weird teenager who picked himself up from the rubble, laughing. _Today is going to be extremely exhausting._

* * *

><p>Sooo~ how was it? Tell me what you think in reviews please!

~Kagu-chan

2. Chapter 2

Yay! Super quick updates! Everyone loves super quick updates! (don't get used to it)

Disclaimer: Um guys? Do you really think I would own One Piece?

* * *

><p>He's met many different types of people before but this one was by far one of the weirdest. Who laughs after falling through the ceiling? Sanji stared at the strange teen. He looked young, with a childish round face and messy black hair. He was wearing a bright red vest and rolled of denim pants with straw flip flops. Sanji noticed that despite the clumsy and careless feel around the teen, he had

carefully picked up an old worn straw hat from the debris and gently patted off any dust before firmly planting it back onto his head.<p>

"Ah~ that surprised me!" the straw hat teen laughed.

"Stop laughing!" Immediately out of nowhere a peg leg came crashing down on top of the teen. Said boy face planted again making a weird strangled noise. "Look at what you did now! You broke my ceiling!"

Quick as a flash, the teen jumped back up. "You were the one that broke it yourself!" he shouted back with equal vigour and head butted with the head chef.

_I want this day to be over! _Sanji thought with dread as he took in the damage. Fallen bits of wood and debris were strewn all over the place, the second floor is probably in worse condition than here judging by the boom from before. Plus, lots of panicking customers, a few which were female and screaming. Immediately Sanji was by their side and giving small reassuring smiles and calmed them down to the best of his abilities, all were given a bow and small kiss on the hand as an apology. It worked at least, since they stopped screaming and smiled weakly back in return. The other chefs can deal with Zeff and the weird teen, he needs to fix the damage as much as he can. The regulars were easy to calm down as were other customers, they mainly came to see the cooks and pirates fight most likely. Now all was left was the stuck up lieutenant and his date.

Sanji forced on his best closed lippered smile and made his way over to their table. He never liked marines. Well at least not the higher ups, they were stuck up and rude and this one was no better. He got worse when Sanji made a light conversation with the lovely lady that accompanied him. Sanji was genuinely surprised and slightly happy when the lady signed at him when he gave a note he couldn't speak. It was a nice break from the rowdy chefs, to be able to talk to a lovely intelligent being. The pink-haired marine didn't think so. Then there was the wine incident.

"_Are you injured, my lady?" _Sanji signed at the woman known as Moodie.

"_No, just slightly shocked that's all. Is everything alright?" _She signed back, gesturing towards Zeff who seemed to be dragging the boy off somewhere.

"_I believe the head chef has everything under control." _Sanji signed back and gave a what he hoped was a reassuring smile. He got his answer when Moodie smiled back. Now to deal with Mr I'm-So-Full-Of-Myself.

Sanji took out his notepad and quickly scribbled a hasty message.

I apologise for the earlier ruckus. Please, continue enjoying your meal.

As soon as he placed the note in front of the marine he rushed off, not interested in listening to his annoying complaints.

"Sanji-kun?"

Sanji froze. He knew that voice. The last time he heard it was a year ago. He turned around slowly.

"Hi." Nami gave a small wave and a smile.

* * *

><p>"I wonder what's taking Luffy so long?" Usopp wondered.<p>

"Who knows?" Nami answered. "He did blow a hole into the restaurant. He's too honest for his own good."

It's been only a few weeks since she met these guys and Nami wasn't sure whether she should regret or think it was one of the best decisions of her life. First Luffy, her proclaimed 'captain' was rather eccentric in his own way. Zoro looks scary but he's actually pretty harmless and rather lazy. Usopp was a liar and a coward but he seemed like the most normal in the group. Actually his fears seem rather reasonable when compared with a normal human. The rest were part monster in Nami's opinion.

_Baratie huh? _Nami stared at the restaurant. _I wonder how Sanji-kun's doing._

Nami still remembered their first meeting like yesterday. After pouring her heart out to him she felt strangely relieved. Like weight lifted off her shoulders after telling everything to someone else. Either way Nami was thankful to the blond half-fishman's understanding of her situation and not prying at her life. He still gave her offerings of money which Nami found hidden close to where they first met. Each offering came with a small note telling about himself. First one saying it was only fair when Nami had told him everything that he should do the same. Nami smiled fondly, it was unnecessary and should be annoying but Nami found herself keeping every single note he left behind. Sometimes they were short, sometimes they were long, sometimes they were mundane like beliefs, morals, there was even one that said he interested in men which surprised the ginger head but nevertheless, she accepted him fully. She even left behind a few notes of her latest thefts for him to read as well.

Then there was the time Nami read about his horrifying childhood. Nami was just managing to hold herself back from sailing all the way to the Baratie to hug the blond and reassure him that everything was alright after reading that particular note. Instead, Nami put the note carefully into a small chest with the rest of the collection and other personal belongings.

It's been a year. A whole year since we met and we only had one conversation. Nami smiled more brightly._ Yet we know more about each other than friends that knew each other for years. I wonder if Luffy will make him the cook?... actually why am I even asking that? Of course he will. He's Luffy._

Nami shook her head and stood up. "Well, I'm going to see what's taking Luffy so long. Maybe even grab something to eat while I'm at it."

"That was your original objective wasn't it?" Usopp asked suspiciously.

_Not really. _"So I'm guessing you don't want to come?" Nami inquired, raising an eyebrow.

Soon enough both Usopp and Zoro were rowing towards the Baratie with Nami sitting bow. _Honestly throw food in with these guys and they immediately heed to every command._

As they were tying the boat to the larger ship they heard a loud crash come from within the restaurant.

What did you do this time, Luffy? The thought in unison, sweat dropping.

When they walked in the first thing they saw was Luffy fighting an old man with a peg leg and was that supposed to be a chef's hat? It was ridiculously tall and what's up with that moustache? The trio stared at the strange scene with disinterest. After all, this wasn't the worst thing Luffy dragged them into.

While Usopp and Zoro were looking Luffy arguing with the weird old man, Nami looked around the restaurant. Despite the weird outer appearance, the inside looked high class and elegant, a place where Nami would enjoy dining at really. As she looked around her eye caught a familiar blond.

She snapped her head in the direction where she spotted the blond hair. Standing there was Sanji, who was currently walking around and calming down customers. He looked so different from when they first met. Nami remembered him in loose clothing, with sea water dripping from slightly curly hair and a bright smile. This Sanji was different, in a suit with gold buttons and a tie, covering nearly every inch of his body, wearing gloves of all things, he seemed like a completely different person. Seeing him calming the female customers first made Nami smile but what quickly extinguished it was the small closed lipped smile he gave. To anyone else it looked like a polite, conserved smile but to Nami it looked forced and fake. It made her scowl.

She noted with some relish that a female customer was signing with him in a conversation. After Sanji finished checking the female customer he turned towards the other person resident at the table, a guy with pink hair. Judging by the look of the guy he seems like an asshole and seeing Sanji hurriedly scribble something on a note and near throwing it on the table before quickly walking away proved it.

It was then Nami decided to make her appearance known.

"Sanji-kun?" she called out. She saw the cook tense and freeze for a few moments before turning around with a slight look of disbelief on his face. She smiled sheepishly.

"Hi." She said lamely, giving a small wave and still smiling awkwardly.

Sanji immediately gained a huge smile, showing a bit of his teeth and

walked over to her. He gave her a questioning glance. Nami knew what it meant.

"Oh, c'mere." She threw her arms around Sanji and hugged him, with Sanji hugging back happily. "I'm here."

"Welcome to the Floating Restaurant Baratie." Sanji answered back softly, keeping as closed lipped as possible. Nami smiled and squeezed him just a bit tighter.

"Nami? You know this person?" Zoro asked taking notice of the reunion of the two. _Who's that blond guy? And what's up with his eyebrows?_

"Yeah! Let me introduce you!" Nami said excitedly, and before Sanji could say anything he was dragged over to a dude with a freakishly long nose and a man withâ€| green hair?

"Guys, this is an old friend of mine, Sanji-kun." Nami gestured to towards Sanji and pointed at the other two at each mention of their name. "Sanji-kun this is Usopp and Zoro."

Sanji gave a bow in greeting. He felt a bit uncomfortable, knowing Nami, it was a high chance she's planning on robbing them blind. He felt a bit sorry for them.

"Now introductions are over, I'm going to catch up with Sanji-kun. You two find a table for us." Nami then without warning dragged Sanji outside. He gave a small wave at the two bewildered men left behind as he was dragged off.

"â€|Any idea about what just happened?" Usopp asked Zoro.

"Nope."

* * *

><p>Sanji had no idea how long they've talked but it didn't seem very long. Time seemed to fly by, updating each other up what they've missed. Sanji learnt with great happiness that Nami learnt sign language and was extremely close to completing her deal with Arlong. Likewise, Nami insisted on listening to anything Sanji wants to say, fully taking advantage of letting him speak as much as he wants. God knows how long it has been since he talked last. Soon Sanji escorted Nami back into the restaurant and led her to the table the other two were sitting at.<p>

"So why are your eyebrows so curly, Curly Cook?" Sanji turned towards the green haired manâ€| Zoro was his name. The man grinned and drew an invisible swirl in the air. Sanji gritted his teeth and glared, before signing his answer, relishing in the stupefied look of the dumb grasshead.

"He's says 'then why does your head resemble a mutant seaweed species, Seaweed Head?'" Nami translated, trying hard not to laugh. Usopp was also snorting at the comparison of Zoro's hair and seaweed. Sanji only raised an eyebrow as a challenge with Zoro glaring back. Sanji snorted before returning his attention to Nami, smiled and walked off. He still has a job to do. Besides, he had the last word so in your face green abomination.

"Oi! Waiter!" called out a familiar and unwelcomed gruff voice. Sanji closed his eyes and counted to ten in his head and made his way over to the marine's table. He noticed Moodie looked a bit uncomfortable and soon he saw why.

"What is this bug doing in my soup?" The marine sneered. Sure enough there was a small bug floating on the surface of the warm liquid. Sanji could feel himself recoiling at the creature and knew that when he gave the man the soup it most certainly did not have a bug in it. Seeing the guilty look on the lovely lady proved that the marine had put the bug in it himself. Sanji felt his hackles rise but nevertheless he kept his temper. He took out his notepad and wrote something down.

I'm not sure, Sir. Looks to me he seems to be having a little swim. Hey, he said he'll keep his temper, never said anything about not being sarcastic. If the man was still sour over wine incident from earlier than he can suck it up. He gave them a wine that complemented their meal better, it was only the marine's own fault for trying to show off with his so-called knowledge of wine.

After reading Sanji's note the sudden change of looking smug and stupid to an angry bull would have been amusing for Sanji if only if only he didn't smash the table in his temper. That had food on it. Resulting with the food falling down on the ground with the table. Sanji bent down and placed his gloved hand on the ruined food not caring that he was dirtying the glove. It was unsalvageable. Perfectly edible food, wasted. Sanji lowered his head, his fringe shadowing his face.

"Fullbody-san!" Moodie cried out.

Nami looked up when she heard the commotion and saw the marine and Sanji. From the looks of it, it seems like Sanji's sarcasm has strike again and now he's pissed off another customer. Under different circumstances Nami would have rolled her eyes and continued on with her business but not this time. That dumb marine had smashed the table and dropped both his and his date's meal on the floor. With bits of wood and china stuck in the food and being on the ground in general the meal was completely inedible.

One.

Sanji was just barely keeping his temper at bay. He spent three days and nights making that soup. Moodie at least finished the majority of her soup but the marine didn't even taste it. Suddenly a dress shoe stomped down on his hands, further squashing it into the ruined soup. If Sanji wasn't wearing gloves he would be picking out bits of china out of his hands later.

Two. Nami noted, taking a bite out of her delicious pasta.

"I'm the customer!" the marine was throwing a fit. "A paying customer! Should you be treating your customers in such an arrogant manner!?"

"Stop it, Fullbody-san!" Moodie grabbed on to his arms in hopes of calming him.

"Shut up!" the marine flung her to the ground. Moodie gave a pained cry when she fell down, hands scrapping on the fallen china.

"F-Fullbody-san?" Moodie meekly called out, bringing her injured hands close to her chest.

_Three. You're out. _

"Can money fill your stomach?" Sanji spoke softly.

"What?" Fullbody was stupefied that the supposed mute chef spoke. Sanji was surprised too, but there's no backing down now.

"I said—" Sanji looked up, teeth bared to the marine only, his hair hiding his face from the rest of the customers. "Can money fill your stomach!?"

The marine gave a cry of shock. "Y-you! _What _are you?!"

Sanji didn't answer, all he saw was red as he jumped onto his hands and gave a roundhouse kick. He didn't know how long he beat up the marine for but all he knows is that the ending result was holding the marine by his neck who was on the brink of unconsciousness, missing several teeth and had blood dripping down his face and arm.

By now several other chefs had come to see what's the commotion about. "Sanji!" "Assistant Head Chef!"

"Messing with a cook of the sea is a good way of getting yourself killed." Sanji said quietly to the marine. "Remember that well."

With that he dropped the marine onto the floor with a thud. He bowed in apology to the customers and he checked up on Moodie but she had a look of fear on her face the whole time he was in contact with her. Sanji tried to shrug it off, it was his own fault anyway, lashing out and scaring her but there was something else that added onto Moodie's fear. When he saw her look fearfully towards his mouth he tensed. So she saw it too. That explains a lot of things.

"Oi Sanji! Are you at it again?!"

Sanji looked disinterestedly to see Patty storming towards him.

"_Got a problem, you shitty cook?" _Sanji signed.

"A shitty cook like you has no right to call me shitty!" Patty shouted back at the smaller man. "What do you think you're doing to our customers! And isn't that the marine lieutenant?! How many times do I have to tell you that customers are everything to a restaurant?!"

Sanji gave a snort. _"Customer or not, this guy had ruined our dishes. Not only that, he insulted the cook who made it as well!"_

Sanji threw a look of disdain to the now cowering marine. _"All I did was show him the consequences of his actions."_

As Patty was about to open his mouth to scream at him again the marine suddenly spoke, recovered slightly from the earlier attack.

"What the hell is wrong with this restaurant? If this is the way you treat your customers how does it stay in business?" the marine gritted out in pain. Sanji tched. He should have kicked harder. He's had enough of the whiny dirt bag.

"I'll destroy it!" the marine shouted out to the best of his ability. "I'll destroy your precious little restaurant! I'll contact my superiors to have it taken down!"

This guy is really asking for a death wish right now. Sanji thought, tapping his dress shoes, readying for another kick. _Luckily for him I'm just about to give it to him._

Unfortunately, the other chefs had noticed him shifting his stance and now there are about five chefs holding him down.

"Stop it Sanji! Calm yourself!" the chefs shouted struggling to keep the half-fishman at bay. Despite being held down by 5 burly men Sanji still managed to advance towards the terrified marine. To say he was furious was an understatement. Sanji was half tempted to open his mouth and scream at the other chefs to let him go. He's going to make that marine wish he was never born!

"Brat, what do you think you're doing?! Are you trying to ruin my restaurant?!" Sanji finally stopped struggling. He turned his head towards the head chef and scowled. _Old man._

"You insolent boy!" Sanji saw it coming and made no move to dodge it. Zeff's peg leg came smashing across his face. Sanji winced slightly. Great, he lost several teeth with that one, he needs to spit them out later.

"And you!" Zeff shouted at the marine, startling him out of his previous short-lived triumph. Zeff gave a good kick to the marine's face, making the man fly a good few meters. "Get the hell out of here!"

What the hell is wrong with this restaurant? Fullbody thought as he struggled to stand up and threw a fearful look at the arguing chefs. _It's likeâ€¦it's like they're a pirate gang! What kind of chefs are they?_"_

"L-lieutenant!" A new voice caught the attention of everyone. They turned and saw a staggering low rank marine. "Lieutenant Fullbody! We have a problem!"

What the man said next made the upper marine's blood run cold. "The Pirate Krieg's man escaped!"

"What?!" Fullbody cried out in shock.

"We thought he would give us a lead to where Krieg's whereabouts!" the marine lowered his head. "We've already lost seven men!"

"That's impossible! When we found him three days ago and he was

nearly starving to death! We haven't even fed him during the time he was captured!" Fullbody cried out in disbelief.

Frightened murmurs rang across the restaurant. Krieg? The most powerful pirate of East Blue? And one of his men's escaped?

Sanji bristled. _They fed nothing to a starving man for three days?_

"I'm really sor-" A gunshot cut off the marine as he fell to the ground lifeless, causing the customers to panic and scream, running as far away from the man standing with the gun. The only people who haven't moved were the chefs, Nami's table and the petrified marine. Slowly the man stepped over the corpse and made his way over to an empty table.

"Another customer has arrived." Patty stated calmly.

"This one had better not cause any more trouble in my restaurant." Zeff grumbled.

Sanji stayed silent. He's had enough today. He made his way over to Nami's table and quietly calmed himself down. Sanji gave a sigh of exhaustion, he hasn't been that angry for a long time. Nami gave him a look of sympathy and patted his arm in comfort. Already he was feeling himself calming down. Honestly, women were a gift sent from heaven and Sanji will eternally feel grateful towards them. oh weird teen was there too. Seems like he came down with the Old Fart.

Sanji observed the staggering man. He was wearing grey pants and matching jacket that was decorated with two dragons on either side in S like shapes with a green shirt underneath it. Under the striped blue and white headband there was blood pouring down his face. Sanji could see his cheeks were hollowed and the dark bags under his eyes showed fatigue and lack of sleep. When Sanji saw his wrist peek out from the man's sleeve Sanji can see the bones in great detail. When the man finally made it towards a table he collapsed in his chair and rested his leg on the table.

"I don't care what it is." The pirate wheezed out, panting and looked up. "Bring me food. This is a restaurant, right?"

"Welcome mere bastard." Patty greeted the starving man with a smile, shocking some customers. "I'm sorry Sir, but you're going to have to pay for a meal here, do you have enough money?"

"That man is going to kill that cookâ€¦!" Fullbody muttered in disbelief.

The pirate paused before lifting the gun to Patty's forehead. "Is a bullet ok?"

Patty scowled. "So I take it you don't have money?" The pirate could only widen his eyes before Patty hammered him into the ground.

Sanji sighed again. _Great another broken chair, so now we have a hole in both of our ceilings, several smashed cutleries, a broken table, broken chairs and the floor's a mess. Either way I am not cleaning that up by myself._

"Oh~ that's a lot of power." The straw hat teen noted.

"If you can't pay, you can't eat." Patty folded his arms and towered over the fallen pirate.

"Good going, Patty-san!" one of the chefs called out, with the customers cheering along with him. A loud growl sounded from the pirate's stomach.

"Oh, your stomach growling quite a bit, you filthy pirate." Patty sneered.

"That was a fart." The pirate weakly protested, smiling up at Patty scornfully. "Hurry up and get me something to eat, you jerk."

"You're no customer so get out of here!" Patty screamed.

As the scene was starting to get worse Sanji slowly made his way to the kitchen. Nami noticed him leaving and smiled, making no move to stop him.

Sanji slipped off his gloves and rolled up his sleeves. He went through the familiar steps of preparing one of his specials. Letting the rhythmic pattern of his chopping take over, Sanji went on auto, listening to the ruckus outside. Sounds like the pirate's being beaten up pretty badly. Five minutes later Sanji was carrying a plate of freshly made food and a glass of water. He made his way out the back door and sure enough he found the pirate lying on the floor. Sanji gently placed the food in front of the pirate and sat down beside him.

"What?" the pirate stared up at him in disbelief before turning his head away from the food. "Take it away! This is worse! I won't accept charity!"

Sanji frowned. "Stop acting tough and eat already." Sanji muttered, making sure his teeth were out of sight. "To me, anyone who's hungry is a customer."

"I-I can't pay for it." The pirate gritted out, barely finishing his sentence before his stomach gave a loud growl.

Sanji gave a grunt of annoyance and rest his head against the railing. "The ocean's vast and cruel. It's awful to be without food and waterâ€¦ I understand starving people better than anyone."

Sanji looked down at the pirate. "I don't care if you want to die with dignity but wouldn't it be better to live and see tomorrow?"

That was all it took. The next moment the pirate began scarfing down the food like the starved man he was.

"This is delicious." The man began to cry. "I thought I was going to die!"

Sanji bought out a cigarette and lit it. Taking a drag, a cloud of smoke was released into the air.

"It's so delicious! I've never had such a good meal in my whole life!" the man paused to wipe away his tears, overwhelmed by the act of kindness.

Sanji grinned. "It's shitty good, isn't it?" Sanji asked with pride.

Suddenly Sanji heard a laugh. "I found a good cook~"

Sanji froze and snapped his mouth shut, snapping his head up. Sure enough the weird teen was standing there on the second floor and looking down at him with the biggest smile that Sanji's has ever seen.

"You're pretty lucky aren't you?" the guy shouted down at the pirate. "If he hadn't helped you it would be all over for you."

"Oi, Cook, care to join us?" Luffy shouted at Sanji. "Be the chef of our pirate ship!"

Huh? "Huh?" Sanji thought while simultaneously the pirate voiced his thoughts.

The fuck?

* * *

><p>I hope you enjoyed this chapter! Please leave a review~

~Kagu-chan

3. Chapter 3

Note:

"speech"

"_sign language_"

thoughts

writing-

Thank you all so much for your reviews, follows and favourites! Seeing people enjoy my stories makes me extremely happy! *bows and cries tears of joy*

Disclaimer: â€|yeah, nah. Sarcastic comebacks are mine though.

* * *

><p>This is restaurant sure is lively. Zoro thought observing the burly chef beating up the pirate, with everyone else cheering him on. Zoro scowled, this was going against a lot of his morals but he didn't do anything to intervene, the guy will probably feel worse getting help from another. The only ones who weren't cheering were him, Nami, Usopp and the weird old man with a tall chef hat. The blond guy from before was nowhere to be seen.

_What's up with him anyway? I thought he couldn't talk. _Zoro thought back to the snarky man. When Nami introduced blond to Zoro he stayed silent and kept his mouth shut firmly. Zoro provoking him later, which he will admit was a rather lack of discipline, to see if he would talk had earned him weird hand gestures and an infuriating closed lipped smirk. The earlier scene of the slender man beating up the stuck up marine, Zoro heard the man loud and clear despite how quiet he was so the man wasn't mute, he just didn't want to talk and judging by the horrified cry from the marine when he did speak, the guy probably had a good reason to keep his mouth shut.

The blond didn't look like much, having a rather delicate touch to him with how he looked and dressed, but Zoro knew a fighter when he saw one. Didn't think he would be that strong, so that surprised Zoro slightly. The man was weird, covering nearly every inch of his body to the point of wearing gloves and the skin that was exposed was so pale it looked translucent. His eyebrow was the first thing that Zoro noticed and it was really hard not to laugh. It looked ridiculous and comical and Zoro couldn't help but poke fun at it. Zoro didn't expect the man to stare at him straight in the eye with that weird black blue eye and insult back with a jab at his hair. Normally people would cower in fear of the 'Demon of the East Blue' but the man just butted heads with him, never backing down from a fight. A_ challenge._

Zoro grinned. He liked that. The guy looked like he was his age and from what he said before seems like he was a chef. A good one too. So a fighter, a chef, the same age as Zoro, tick, tick, tick and tick, Zoro has no complaints for the possible future crewmate. Zoro saw Luffy chasing after the blond and knew the guy's fate has been sealed. Once Luffy has you in his clutches you will never escape nor will you really want to.

That blond is going to join whether he liked it or not and Zoro sure as hell wasn't complaining.

* * *

><p>Sanji was quite in a predicament. The teen was staring at him intently with an excited gleam in his eye after asking his question and Sanji had a funny feeling he wasn't going to have much choice with this one. He took a calming drag of his cigarette and lowered his head so the teen couldn't see his mouth. The other man had his full attention on the teen so Sanji didn't bother hiding from him. he still turned sideways just in case.<p>

"So, you're a pirate?" Sanji asked foregoing trying to pretend he can't speak. He had a feeling pretending not to talk will only cause him a headache around this guy.

"Yup!" the teen answered happy and jumped off the second floor and landed next to Sanji.

"Why did you attack us?" Sanji asked. According to the other chefs this guy was the reason why they have to pay a hefty sum for damage repair.

"That was an accident! I'm sorry!" the teen whined slightly. Sanji wasn't so sure how you can accidentally blow a hole in the roof but the

teen seemed to be telling the truth despite how far-fetched so Sanji accepted the apology.

"Hey, join us!" the teen demanded.

"I refuse." Sanji's response was immediate. "I have my reasons why I must stay here."

"No! I refuse!" Suddenly the teen was in his face and Sanji nearly swallowed his cigarette in surprise.

"R-refuse what?" Sanji stuttered, covering his mouth with the pretence of reaching for his death stick.

"I refuse your refusal!" The teen stated with a tone of finality. "You're a good cook, so come with me to be a pirate!"

_What the hell is up with this guy?! _Sanji screamed in his head, as he stared up at the teen in shock. _What's up with his logic?!_

"Hey, listen here, you need to respect other people's decisions!" Sanji exclaimed, still covering his mouth. "I'm not going with you!"

"Don't care! Join us!"

Sanji snapped. Too many people been rubbing on his nerves today and his emotions had been going in loops of being happy and angry. The restaurant's half ruined, another person found out about his teeth and then there's the weird teen!

"I said I won't join! Leave me alone, you bastard, before I fillet you!" Sanji shouted at the teen, jumping up and shoving his face in the teen's face. Sanji quietened down when he saw the teen staring at him with wide eyes. "What?"

"â€|YOU'RE TEETH ARE SO COOL~!" The teen exclaimed with stars in his eyes.

Sanji froze. When he jumped up and shouted at the straw hat bastard he had completely forgot about hiding his teeth. Sanji slapped his hands over his mouth. _Shit!_

"That's it! You're joining! No arguments! Captain's Orders!" the teen shouted in his excitement.

Sanji was stunned for a few seconds before he snapped back. "What?! You're not my captain! How many times do I need to tell you the answer is NO?!"

"Join us!" The teen was relentless.

"No!"

"Yes!"

"No!"

"Yes!"

"No!"

"YES!"

"NO!"

"Um, sorry to interrupt butâ€|"

The intrusion of the new voice caught the attention of both arguing males. Sanji paled. He forgot there was still another pirate. Four people saw his teeth today. Four. Sanji quietened down and turned his full attention towards the Krieg pirate with a blank face.

"What?" Sanji asked curtly, sucking on his death stick again. The man stared at him warily but continued on talking. Well at least this man was polite about his less than human features.

"I'm part of the Krieg pirates. I'm Gin." The man introduced himself before turning his attention to the straw hat teen. "So you're a pirate too?"

"What's your goal?" the pirate Gin asked.

"I'm looking for One Piece." The teen grinned his answer. "I'm headed for the Grand Line."

Gin widened his eyes and began to sweat. "You're still looking for a cook so your crew must still be pretty small."

"Yeah we got five, including him." Luffy confirmed, pointing at Sanji.

"Why the hell are you including me?!" Sanji exclaimed, annoyed.

"You look like a decent guy, so let me give you a piece of advice." Gin continued ignoring Sanji's outburst. "You better not go to the Grand Line. You're still young, there's no need to rush. Grand line is only a small part of this world's vast ocean."

"I see." The teen answered offhandedly before asking the pirate with a bit more enthusiasm, "do you know anything about the Grand Line?"

Gin gained a haunted look. "No I don't know anything about it. Nothing at all. That's what makes it so scary."

"Aren't you part of the Krieg Pirates?" Sanji asked. "I didn't know there were cowards on his crew."

Gin stayed silent but he lowered his eyes to the ground. Sanji sighed. Maybe he was a bit harsh on with that last comment.

"Let's get you a ship." Sanji suddenly spoke and walked off to untether one of the smaller boats on the Baratie. "You were captured so I highly doubt you would have a boat. Take this one."

"â€|Are you sure?" Gin asked hesitant. "You've already fed me."

"Just take it. We've got two more." Sanji waved off the other man's hesitancy. Gin looked back at the teen but all he did was grin at him. Gin smiled slightly before jumping on the boat. After checking everything he looked up at the two males.

"Later then." He said.

"I'm still going to the Grand Line." Straw Hat (Sanji decided to call him that) clarified.

"Yeah, do what you want. We're strangers so I have no right to tell you what to do." Gin regarded Straw Hat. "I was only warning you."

"Sanji-san." Gin turned his attention towards the withdrawn blond. A slight shift in his stance showed that he was listening so Gin continued. "Thank you so much, you saved my life."

Gin gave a huge smile. "The fried rice was delicious. Can I come again?"

Sanji paused before smiling back showing off his teeth. He's already broken too many of his personal rules today so might as well continue and start fresh tomorrow. "Anytime!"

"So there you are, waiter boy." And Straw Hat snapped his head up.

"Ah! It's the old man!" He cried out. Sure enough there stood Zeff in all his stern glory.

"Gin, get going." Sanji ordered quietly.

"I'm sorry." Gin clutched at his head band. "Because of me you're going to get in trouble."

"Trouble? What trouble?" Sanji mocked confusion and picked up the empty plate and glass. He walked over to the railing and threw the evidence into the ocean. Gin stared with wide eyes as the plate and glass landed with a splash and slowly sunk to the bottom of the ocean.

"Trouble for feeding a customer for free? What proof do you have?" Sanji grinned down at Gin. The man was overwhelmed. Ever since the Sanji had met him he had treated him with nothing but kindness. As he set sail from the floating restaurant he went on his knees and bowed as deep as he could.

"Thank you Sanji-san!" Gin cried out. "I'll never forget this!"

"Don't get caught again, Gin!" Sanji called back. Both Sanji and Straw Hat watched as the boat grew smaller.

"Sanji! Waiter boy!" the old man called out the moment the ship was merely a dot on the horizon. "Get back to work!"

Sanji and Straw Hat watched the old man disappear from sight.

"Join our-"

"No."

"But whyyyy~?" The teen whined. "You're a good cook and you have really cool teeth! I've already decided it'll be you as our cook and no one else!"

"I have my reasons." Sanji stated and glared at the teen. "While I am flattered, you'll have to find another cook. If you plan on setting sail, you'll need to find a cook. Just. Not. Me. Got it?"

"No!"

"Why are you so stubborn, dammit?!"

"Join us!" Suddenly Straw Hat's arms extended far beyond humanly possible, wrapped around Sanji's neck and suddenly Sanji found himself giving a very unwilling piggyback ride to the teen.

"The fuck?! Let go of me! What the hell happened to your arms?!" Sanji exclaimed, struggling against the tight arms wrapped around his neck.

"I ate the gum-gum fruit! I'm a rubber man!" The teen stretched his cheek as if to prove what he said was true.

Devil fruit user? Sanji thought as he continued to try and pry the teen off of him. After ten minutes of fruitless struggling Sanji gave up and began walking back into the kitchen with a new acquired human backpack.

As Sanji was making his way back inside he could feel a small smile growing on his face. Another stranger accepted him. So far only three people accepted him wholeheartedly for who he was and what he was when they first met him without question. First time was when he was ten, second time was eight years later and now. Despite himself Sanji could feel himself getting less annoyed. It's like the teen made the people who surround him forcefully happy with the infectious sunny attitude he had.

"â€|Will you please let go of me so I can work?" Sanji asked.

"Nope! You're my crew's cook now and I'm not letting you go!" The teen tightened his grip even more. Sanji felt his vein throb before sighing and resigned to giving a piggyback ride to the teen. At least it didn't hinder his work since the teen was doing all the work of clinging onto him. It really did feel like Sanji was just carrying a really strange backpack.

As Sanji was filleting a fish for the next dish he felt Straw Hat looking around the busy kitchen. Sanji could feel a few stares but he tuned them out. If he can tune out eardrum shattering angry screams than he can tune out a few random stares.

"Oi! Waiter boy! If you're doing nothing go wash the dishes!" Patty screamed and forcefully pulled the teen off of Sanji, nearly choking him in the process since the guy had wrapped his arms around his neck extremely securely. Sanji coughed for a few minutes, getting his

breath back and glared at Patty and flipped him off with both hands. Patty only flipped back and dragged the teen to the piles of dirty dishes.

Soon the usual rowdy screams and insults flew across room and Sanji finally relaxed. _Normalcy. At last._

crash

Sanji frowned but continued to chop the vegetables a bit more vigorously.

crash

Sanji could feel his eyebrow twitch but he tipped the vegetables into the pot to finish off the simmering stew.

crash

Sani taste tested the stew and decided to add some salt. He tasted it again and gave a satisfied smile. Perfect.

crash

"Oi, waiter boy! How many dishes did you break?!" Patty screamed finally finding out where the crashing came from.

"Ah, I forgot to count." Straw Hat broke yet another dish.

Patty fumed. "You're not supposed to!"

Sanji glanced over and narrowed his eyes. He put the stove cooking the stew on low to keep it warm and grabbed a notepad. He marched over and dragged the clueless teen away from the angry chef.

"Hey! Don't eat the customer's food!"

Sanji frowned and looked over and sure enough Straw Hat seemed to be chewing something. Sanji seethed yanked the younger man by the ear and exited the kitchen.

"Look, just go and take customers' orders ok? All you have to do is ask what they want and write it down. Surely you're not dumb enough not to understand that?" Sanji gritted out, trying to keep his temper in check. "when you give us the orders don't even think about touching anything in the kitchen. If you do, I wouldn't mind trying to see if I can cook a rubber man, alright?"

All Sanji saw was the teen's eyes grow comically large and nervous sweat gathered on his brow before he slammed the door in his face.

Sanji stomped back to his station and barely even rolling up his sleeves he felt a tap on his shoulder. Sanji's vein throbbed and he turned around. A wine bottle was shoved in face by a scowling Patty.

"Table five ordered this. Go take it to them." Patty stated, shoving it in Sanji's hands. Sanji took it without question and made his way out of the kitchen. All the chefs were old and burly, most were

ex-pirates or had been involved with shady business and they looked it too. Sanji was the only one with a face that won't scare people and better. They've already scared of their waiters, no need to scare of customers as well. But firstâ€¦

Sanji glared at his soiled gloves. Fucking marine ruined one of his favourites. He made a quick detour to his room and threw the ruined gloves onto his bed. After shifting around Sanji found a pair he deemed worthy and tugged it on, hiding his naturally sharp nails and grey tone at the fingertips.

As Sanji made his way out of the room he spotted himself in the mirror. He stared for a split second to scowl at his reflection before quickly averting his eyes and made his way back into the restaurant.

Slowly, Sanji made his way back to dining hall, slowly began to build up his walls again. He's lost his temper way too much, it's time to go back to being professional. That earlier incident with the marine was stupid and childish. He's needs keep in check when he needs to let off some steam so he won't explode on customers again. _Plusâ€¦_ Sanji pressed his lips together tightly. _No more letting people see my teeth. Gin, Straw Hat and Moodie shouldn't be a problem but that marineâ€¦_ no, don't dwell on it. If they take me I won't go down without a fight._

Sanji stopped right in front of the closed doors to the restaurant and took in a deep breath. He schooled his features into the familiar expression of calm and just the right amount of smiling to be polite. It was forced but he's been doing it for years now, so it came instinctively.

Sanji walked in and made his way over to table five. Another date it seemed, with the man and woman talking softly to each other and Sanji made his presence as scarce as he can, not wanting to interrupt the date. The lady smiled up at him when he poured wine in her glass and he smiled back. When he turned his attention to the man, he earned a glare and Sanji only stared at him neutrally, calmly pouring wine into the man's glass. Did the guy get less wine than his date? Possibly.

"Sanji-kun! Over here!"

Sanji immediately perked up and looked around and spotted Nami waving him over. He quickly placed the wine bottle down and hurriedly made his way over to the loudest table in the restaurant, completely oblivious to the lingering stare of the lady and seething glare of her date.

"_Is there anything I can help you with, milady?"_ Sanji signed, smiling a bit more genuinely.

"Mm!" Nami nodded. "I'll have any specials made by you. The food here's good but you promised I would try your cooking."

Sanji smiled remembering the promise made over their many passed notes. _"How about the Scallop Piccata with SautÃ©ed Spinach accompanied with Angel Hair pasta?"_

"Sounds delicious." Nami said and folded her arms, looking up at

Sanji. "So did you meet Luffy?"

"_Straw Hat? Yeah."_ Sanji answered back. _"Crazy guy was going on about making me the cook to his pirate ship. I refused and he had the nerve to say he refuses my refusal."_

"Sounds like something Luffy would say." Nami laughed. "He forced all of us to be his crewmates as well. We didn't want to as first but now here we are."

"_Wait. You're the crew he was talking about?" _Sanji asked surprised. _"And you agreed?"_

"Nami? Can you translate for us?" The long nose guy asked timidly. "This is a rather one-sided conversation for us."

Before Nami could answer they heard an outraged cry above them and all present at the table looked up. Speak of the devil, Luffy was staring down at them with a betrayed look on his face.

"Ah! That's not fair! How come you guys are allowed to eat?! That's hurts!" Luffy whined and Sanji blinked. When did he get to the table so fast? Just a few seconds ago he was still walking down the stairs!

"Yo, Luffy! I heard you're stuck working here for a year! Can I redraw the flag?" Zoro laughed at his captain's misfortune and took a bite from the stew Sanji remembered he made earlier. "I have to admit through, the food here is great."

Sanji blinked and smiled slightly, pleasantly surprised that the brute complimented his cooking. Seems like he wasn't a total asshole after all. He actually didn't look half bad now that Sanji had a closer look, maybe even considered attractive in Sanji's books. Sanji took in the detail of the definition of the guy's muscles, toned to be perfect vessels of power and the sun-kissed tan skin—ok time to stop that trial of thought.

"I feel kinda sorry for you." The green haired man continued and threw his head back and laughed. Luffy, who was picking his nose, chose that opportunity to flick a freshly picked booger into Zoro's glass of water. Sanji gagged and crinkled his nose but he didn't say anything. Usopp and Nami were trying to stifle their laughs, turning away from Zoro and laughing quietly into their hands. They started to laugh harder when Zoro reached for his glass of water.

"Still, on year of working here? That's rather harsh—" Zoro tipped the glass near his mouth. Sanji was about to warn him but before he could even blink the guy had already jumped up and tipped it forcefully into Luffy's mouth instead. "YOU DRINK IT!"

"Why would you do that?!" Luffy rolled around on the floor, gagging and coughing. Usopp and Nami were already laughing with no restraints and even Sanji's mouth was twitching into a smile but he kept a straight face.

"You too! What were you trying to pull?" Zoro asked, towering over his captain, scowling. Usopp and Nami were still laughing, banging the table and clutching their stomach from laughing too hard.

Sanji stiffened when he felt a whole restaurant's worth of stares aimed at their table and he looked around sheepishly at the customers. They were being pretty loud, albeit he was making no noise but the other four were.

After Luffy finally recovered he spotted Sanji standing beside his crew's table and smiled hugely.

"Ah! I should introduce you!" Luffy jumped up and wrapped his limbs around Sanji again. "This is Sanji! He's a really good cook and is going to be joining our crew! Plus he has really-"

Sanji slapped his hand over Luffy's mouth and glared at him. He did not need the whole restaurant to know about his teeth. Luckily the younger man took the hint but he didn't stay quiet.

"Either way, he's the crew's cook now so you better get along with him!" Luffy exclaimed when Sanji released him.

"Is that so Sanji-kun?" Nami asked surprised before Sanji could protest again. "I thought you wanted to stay here but it so, I welcome you with open arms. I need someone with an intelligence level above cavemen on the crew."

Sanji deflated and shook his head painfully. Nami's mouth turned down slightly and he deflated even more if possible. He hated to upset Nami or any lady, it just didn't sit right with him to see a look of distress on a lady's face and know that he was the one that caused it.

"_I'm sorry, Nami-swan. I would love to go out to sea with a goddess like you but you know why I must stay."_ Sanji replied. Nami knew if he had dog ears they would be dropping pathetically.

"_Eh, don't worry about it. Knowing what's going to happen Luffy going to somehow, by some miracle, make you join and you will be completely happy with it. Come on, the kicked puppy look doesn't suit you. Smile."_ Nami signed this time and made a semicircle with her fingers on her face as an indication to smile. Immediately Sanji brightened up when he saw that Nami wasn't really upset and gave a lopsided smile.

"Great, now we don't understand either of them, this isn't even one-sided anymore." Usopp complained. Zoro only stared at Sanji.

That smile looked genuine. It looked nothing like the frozen forced one that Zoro has been seeing. It wasn't flattering to the man in the slightest, stretching his face awkwardly like he hasn't smiled for a long time and he just looked goofy in general, looking like he was on cloud nine. _What did the Sea Hag say to him that made him this happy? He looks like an idiot. _Zoro thought grumpily, _Why am I even bothered by this?_

"_I'm sorry, Nami-swan. I hope you can find it in yourself to forgive me. There's just an obstacle in the way of us traveling the seas together."_ Sanji apologized and gave a kiss to the back of the ginger's hand. Out of the corner of his eye he could see Zoro and Luffy looking a little put out, staring at him and his attitude towards women. Sanji ignored them both in favour of a paying more

attention to his goddess.

Nami smiled, happy with the attention that she was given. She ignored the extravagant words, since she got used to it over the years of reading it through notes, honestly this was pretty tame compared to what he usually says. These words were purely meant to make ladies feel happy after all, so Nami knew there was no ill intent. Plus, he doesn't even swing that way but the sweet words were nice to hear.

"Is that obstacle me, by any chance, Shitty Eggplant?" Zeff suddenly appeared out of nowhere, obviously being there long enough to see his adopted son sign the last sentence. Sanji gave a small start. You would think that having a peg leg and being old would make one's presence known but nope. The shitty geezer makes little to no noise and it unnerved Sanji sometimes.

Shitty Geezer. Sanji turned around and levelled the old man with a glare.

"This is great, why don't you just go ahead and be a pirate with them?" Zeff continued, levelling Sanji with his own glare. "We don't need you here anymore."

_What?! _Sanji clenched his fists and his glare turned damn near murderous. _"Shitty Geezer, I'm the sous-chef here, what's this shit about not needing me here anymore?"_

"You always fight with our customers, you flirt with our female customers and you make shitty food." Zeff replied, and began walking over and stood menacingly in front of Sanji. "You're nothing but a burden to this restaurant!"

Sanji glared down at the old head chef and stayed quiet. He could hear the snickers of the other chefs but he ignored them and payed his full attention to Zeff.

"The other chefs don't like you, so why don't you just go be a pirate and do whatever you please and get the hell out of here!?" Zeff shouted in Sanji's face.

Sanji counted to ten in his head and without even knowing it, his usual blank face started to come back. Void of all emotion he continued staring at the head chef. _"I don't care about your other excuses but no one talks shit about my food. No one. Not even you."_

When Zeff saw Sanji's blank face slowly take place the old man's face suddenly showed an indescribable emotion before kicking Sanji across the room.

Sanji grimaced but made no sound as he crashed into a table_. Great another table brokenâ€¦wait why isn't there any food on meâ€¦? _He looked up and saw he had crashed into Nami's table, each person that was present had grabbed a plate of food, safe and out of harm's way. Sanji felt a slight swell of happiness for that.

Nami gave a stare at Sanji, silently asking if he was alright. Sanji gave a slight nod and she relaxed slightly. Sanji turned his attention back to the head chef, face back to its neutral scowl. If

Sanji noticed the old man became slightly less tense to see the usual scowl on Sanji's face he said nothing.

"_I don't care what you say, but I'm staying here and I will become the head chef. So sorry to disappoint, but I'm not leaving."_ Sanji signed, still slightly sore from being thrown around all day. Honestly, he's not some punching bag, just because he can withstand pain doesn't mean it doesn't _hurt_.

"Hmph, good luck becoming the head chef. I'm going to live for another 100 years!" Zeff replied.

"_Then I'll live 1000."_ Sanji sniped back and stared defiantly at the head chef. Zeff only huffed and walked away.

â€|_Is it sad that I believe that? Shitty Geezer's probably gonna outlive all of us. _Sanji thought, contrasting completely with what he had signed as he stared at the retreating back of Baratie's founder.

Sanji jolted when he felt a heavy slap to the back and he turned around to find Luffy way to close for comfort grinning.

"This is great! He just gave you his blessing! Now you can be a pi-" Before Luffy could even finish, Sanji had already grabbed him by the neck, efficiently cutting him off, and gave a warning glare at the rubber man. The guy didn't even look that affected, damn him and his devil fruit powers. At least he stayed quiet.

Sanji immediately jumped up and righted the table and smoothed out the table cloth. _Well the table isn't broken by some miracle. _

"_I apologise for that earlier disruption, here, I've ordered a Fruit Macedonia for you, my princess."_ Sanji gently placed the dessert he grabbed from a passing tray in front of Nami.

"Oh~ it's looks so pretty!" Nami clasped her hand together in delight and took a bite out of her dessert. "It's delicious!"

"Oi, what about us?" Usopp complained at the blond. Sanji stared back coolly and wrote something down on his notepad before sliding it across towards the long-nose.

I've ordered some hot tea for you. Do you want mochi* along with it?-

As Usopp fumed, Nami looked up at Sanji with big doe eyes. Sanji didn't even need her to say anything before he nodded in confirmation. He looked over at the over guys present and quickly signed something towards Nami.

"Yay! Oh by the way you guys still have to pay." Nami informed the other two.

"Wait, what about you?!" Usopp asked in disbelief.

"I don't have to pay. Sanji would never let an old friend pay for food, would you?" Nami aimed the last part of her sentence towards Sanji who smiled back goofily in agreement.

"Hey, how come she gets the special treatment? I'll sue you, love cook!" Usopp shouted and turned towards Zoro. "Go get him Zoro!"

"Can you please stop choking our captain?" Zoro asked dead panned, ignoring Usopp completely.

Sanji blinked and looked down. Sure enough he was still grabbing onto Luffy's neck, but thanks to his devil fruit power, the teen only stretched his neck to a comfortable length and was quietly drinking the arrived tea. Sanji narrowed his eyes and let go. Sure enough, exactly like rubber, the teen's head snapped back and knocked him backwards from the force. Sanji gave him a kick to the head for good measure.

Sanji lifted Luffy into a head lock and began dragging the winded teen across the floor. "That's enough slacking off, go and hand the customers towels when they walk in, got it?" Sanji spoke into Luffy's ear.

"Yes, sir." The teen answered back meekly.

The remaining three only stared at the two walking away with sweat drops running down their head. If you listened hard enough one could hear a jazzy saxophone playing in the background. But then again, it could be your imagination.

* * *

><p>*A Japanese rice cake that is really tasty and I recommend you try some if you haven't before!

**Thank you all again for your reviews and if you have any questions or things you would like to say about this fic whether it's positive or negative please do! I love hearing other people's opinions!
:D**

~Kagu-chan

End
file.